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Identical letters dated 29 October 2008 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Upon instruction from my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter which represents the position of the Syrian Arab Republic on the eighth semi-annual report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004) (see annex).

I would highly appreciate it if the present letter and its annex were to be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the identical letters dated 29 October 2008 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

[Original: Arabic]

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith identical letters addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the President of the Security Council on the position of the Syrian Arab Republic with respect to the eighth semi-annual report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004).

1. The resolutions adopted by the Ministerial Council of the League of Arab States held at the summit level in the Syrian capital Damascus in March 2008 underlined support for the Lebanese national reconciliation process and the sovereignty and integrity of its territory.

2. The Syrian Arab Republic, as the President of that Arab summit and Lebanon's neighbour, has demonstrated solid support for the implementation of summit resolutions, through its espousal of the sessions of the Lebanese National Dialogue that were hosted in Doha, sponsored by Qatar and the League of Arab States, and culminated in the signature on 21 May 2008 by the Lebanese parties of the Doha Agreement.

3. On the basis of the firm Syrian policy, the President of Lebanon, Michel Sleiman, visited the Syrian Arab Republic on 13 and 14 August 2008, at the invitation of President Bashar Al-Assad, the President of the most recent Arab summit, with a view to positively promoting Syrian-Lebanese relations and put them on the right track. During the Syrian-Lebanese summit, it was agreed that diplomatic relations would be established between the two countries and that embassies would be opened; borders would be drawn up and determined; and the problem of missing Lebanese and Syrian persons addressed.

4. In consultation with the Lebanese side, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reinforced its troops on the Syrian side of the Syrian-Lebanese border, with a view to halting and preventing smuggling and sabotage.

5. In this context, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms its denial of the claims that were made in paragraph 22 of the report, which referred to the concern of a number of Member States that weapons and fighters continue to flow across the Syrian-Lebanese border. In that regard, we refer the Secretariat to the report of the Lebanon Independent Border Assessment Team II (S/2008/582), dated 26 August 2008, which in several places stated that it had not recorded any instances related to the smuggling of arms or related equipment at the Masnaa border point or any other land border crossing point. The report also stated that there were no reports of any seizure of weapons or ammunition by General Customs or the Lebanese Armed Forces. In clarification, we should like to point out that Israel is the one that circulates information of that nature, which is unfortunately embraced by a permanent member of the Security Council because of its antagonistic attitude towards the Syrian Arab Republic.

6. The aim of circulating such claims is to distract attention from the violations of Lebanese airspace and territorial waters that are perpetrated by Israel on a daily basis and justify its continued infraction of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006).

7. While the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms its respect for the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of Lebanon, it requests others to do the same, and asks that certain international Powers should desist from interfering in that country's internal affairs by word or in deed, in order to preserve the security and stability of Lebanon.

8. The Syrian Arab Republic affirms its firm position, namely, that international peace and security are fundamentally dependent on the commitment of Member States to the implementation of the resolutions of international legitimacy, without double standards or selectivity. It also underlines the need for the Security Council to shoulder its responsibilities with complete impartiality and neutrality, and for Israel to be held accountable and penalized for its continued daily violations of Lebanese territory, airspace and territorial waters, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1559 (2004), the principle aim of which was to bolster Lebanese sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity. The continued Israeli violations of and penetrations into certain regions of south Lebanon increase tension and escalate the security situation, which are in any case tense because of Israel's continued occupation of certain regions of south Lebanon.

9. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic also calls for Israel to be compelled to withdraw from the Shab'a Farms and from the northern part of the village of Ghajar and end its occupation of those areas, which constitutes a violation of Lebanese sovereignty, as the Secretary-General states in paragraph 26 of his eighth report, in fulfilment of the obligations devolving upon Israel pursuant to the second operative paragraph of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004).

10. With respect to paragraph 24 of the report, regarding the deployment of the Syrian army along the northern Syrian-Lebanese border, over which some Lebanese leaders have expressed their concern, we should like to state the following:

(a) The Syrian army has been deployed on Syrian territory along the Syrian-Lebanese border and no more than 800 troops are involved;

(b) That deployment was one of the outcomes of the Syrian-Lebanese summit, and was agreed upon by both Presidents;

(c) The aim of that deployment is to secure the borders and prevent smuggling and sabotage;

(d) While that deployment was necessary for Syrian security, it also benefits the security situation in Lebanon.

11. The Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms yet again that the delineation of the Syrian-Lebanese border in accordance with international law is a bilateral issue that relates to State sovereignty and has been agreed upon by the Syrian and Lebanese Governments. Against that background, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic stresses that the real impediment to efforts to delineate the common border is the continued occupation by Israel of the occupied Syrian Golan, the Shab'a

Farms and the northern part of the village of Ghajar and its refusal to comply with the resolutions of international legitimacy.

12. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic stresses that the Palestinian presence in Lebanon is regulated by the 1969 Cairo Agreement that was signed by Lebanon and the Palestine Liberation Organization, and that the Syrian Arab Republic has nothing to do with those bilateral Lebanese-Palestinian arrangements. Strictly speaking, all Palestinian sites in Lebanon fall within Lebanese territory. The Syrian Arab Republic is therefore not responsible for any shortcomings in those agreements, if there are indeed any.

13. In this context, we should like to note that citation in this report of the Secretary-General of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) is not in the proper context and is an unjustified confusion of documents and mandates.

14. Once again, the Syrian Arab Republic affirms that its concern for the security and stability of Lebanon is comparable to its concern for its own security and stability. The reports of the Secretary-General continue to demonstrate prejudice against the Syrian Arab Republic, which has done and continues to do a great deal to ensure the stability of its fraternal neighbouring country Lebanon.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative